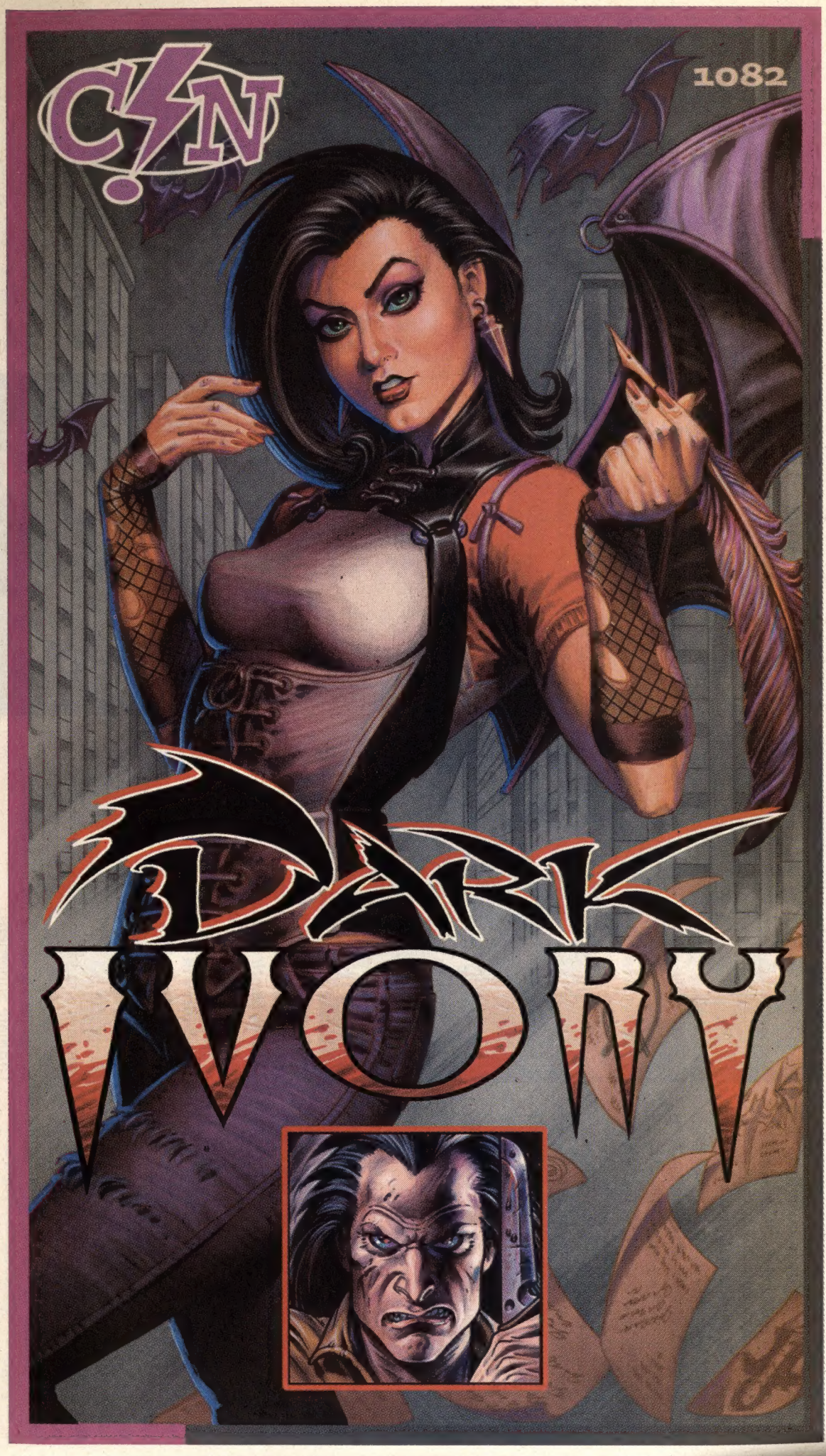
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DARK
IVORY

# After Dawn Comes Dark

*Joseph Michael Linsner* had no idea, when he created the seductive, sultry Dawn, that she would become so iconic that his name would immediately be associated with the character. It's not that Linsner doesn't enjoy the character, mind you—but he's far from a one-concept creator, as he has demonstrated on many occasions and will prove once again with the release of his new Image book, ***Dark Ivory.***

"I love Dawn, but I could never draw her on a regular basis," Linsner said. "She would drive me crazy. The last Dawn series, ***Three Tiers***, took a lot out of me. I shifted gears for a year and did ***Claws*** for Marvel, which was like a wonderful paid vacation. Drawing Wolverine was so much fun.

"With ***Dark Ivory***, it is back to work! I am having fun with this series, but on ***Claws***, I was just a hired hand. On creator-owned series, a lot more work has to get done by fewer people."

"And when Dawn drives Joe crazy, he drives me crazy," his creative partner and collaborator *Eva Hopkins* added. "If you think *he* was happy doing ***Claws***, that's nothing compared to how happy *I* was!"

***Dark Ivory*** brings back Linsner's cult-favorite vampire character Esque, the star of the memorable ***Vampire's Christmas.*** This time around, Esque serves as a catalyst for a young woman's transformative experiences. "Ivory is a smart but cynical goth girl with a troubled home life who sneaks away to the nightclubs of New York City in an attempt to add some excitement to her life," Hopkins explained. "She thinks becoming a vampire would just be the coolest thing *evar*. Until it happens."

"At the heart of the story is a very classic concept – be careful what you wish for, because you just might get it," Linsner added. "Ivory is a teenager who dreams of the classic vampiric myth – stay up all night, live forever, and never age. I know a lot of people who would love that lifestyle. We're going to turn Ivory's preconceptions upside down and see how she deals with the dark underbelly of her fantasies. This four-issue mini-series is just the first of at least three series."

Intoxication of the senses, all I want is more. I'm seeing things in moonlight that I never saw before -
Are you the one who can show me where to go? Open my eyes to what I need to know?
SO COOL
HEY, I LIKE THE WAY YOU DANCE.
MIND IF I DANCE WITH YOU?

Readers of Dawn might find the name Esque familiar... and with good reason! "Esque first popped up in ***Cry For Dawn,***" Linsner explained. "I expanded his world in ***The Vampire's Christmas***, where ***Dark Ivory*** actually has a cameo. Esque is my anti-vampire. He is ugly and decayed. His teeth are rotten so he needs to kill with a knife. He sleeps in subway tunnels. Very unglamorous. He plays a key supporting role in this first series.

"Esque is a rough character, a punk-rock vampire – he contrasts starkly against Ivory's prettiness. If Ivory wants to be an *Anne Rice*-type vampire – well, Esque is the first vampire she meets, & obviously he's nothing like that at all," Hopkins said.

Concepts like zombies and werewolves and golem-like monsters may wax and wane in popularity, but it seems that the vampire never loses his perpetual appeal. What makes vampires such an evergreen fantasy-horror concept? And what makes the concept appealing to Linsner and Hopkins, creatively and personally? "Vampires are fascinating because they are human monsters," Linsner said. "Under the right circumstances, they can blend in with society. And I am sure that everyone has crossed paths with a human leech, a psychic vampire who leaves you feeling drained. The core concepts behind vampires are so universal that they can withstand any number of variations."

Hopkins offered another view on the nature of vampires. "Having been to way too many goth/industrial nights at clubs, I can tell you that vampires are 100% real. They are the ones sucking up all the free drinks; saying they'll call you & then never following through; the strangely charismatic person who never seems to have to pay for anything, always elusive —and seemingly unaware of their draining effect on others."

***Dark Ivory*** may be coming into print in 2008, but the origins of the series go back to the beginnings of the century. "It took the better part of a decade for this all to gel!" Hopkins revealed.

"***Dark Ivory*** started seven years ago with the publication of ***Dark Ivory #0,***" Linsner added. "That was a collection of sketches and sample pages. There were still some gaps in the story, so Eva and I decided to keep working on the story and only put it out when every part of it felt right. Work ends on ***Dark Ivory*** in a few months when we finish up the fourth issue. On average, it takes two and a half months to wrap up an issue."

"The story we have now is radically different from where it was almost eight years ago, when Ivory was 'born,'" Hopkins said. "I didn't want it to be just another vamp chick in spandex – instead, I wanted to examine the whole idea of vampires & throw in an unusual love story, and I am thrilled all over again. I was pretty miffed that we didn't work on ***Ivory*** back in the day, but now I'm grateful – it wouldn't have been ripe yet."

What made Linsner and Hopkins decide to offer their book through Image, rather than following the self-publishing route? "Coming from a background of self-publishing, Image is the perfect publisher for me," Linsner said. "Linsner.com still publishes prints and portfolios, but for bigger projects, like my 2007 hardcover collection of pin-up art, ***Girls & Goddesses***, it just makes so much sense to go with Image. They have been nothing but 100% supportive of every project we've done together."

"Having had a good experience working with Image on ***Dawn***, it became clear that Image was the right home for ***Dark Ivory*** as well," Hopkins said. "Image gives us freedom & support, sure, but more importantly, I really felt that they understood what we wanted from the story. Our relationship with them is solid. Self-publishing this, doing all the business stuff while creating at the same time – oh no. That wouldn't have been good for us or the book."

***Dark Ivory*** is co-produced by Linsner and Hopkins; Linsner explains how the collaborative process works. "The writing is done ping-pong style. We bat ideas and dialogue back and forth until we are both happy. I penciled and inked the thing, and we are coloring it together. The painted covers are by me. Eva has been invaluable to this project. It would not be happening without her."

"What the man said," Hopkins responded. "We both write & color, he draws, our pal *Jeff Eckleberry* is our letterer."

Considering the amazing popularity of Dawn, though, one has to wonder: why not satisfy the legions of fans who are clamoring for any new Dawn material by Linsner? "I like to keep myself interested," Linsner said. "Variety is the spice of life."

However, one project doesn't necessary preclude the other, as Linsner pointed out. "Dawn will be coming back in 2009 to celebrate her 20th anniversary in print. The first issue of ***Cry For Dawn*** came out in December 1989, so we're gonna throw a big party and celebrate."

Hopkins expanded on the plans behind that celebration. "Dawn's 20th anniversary in '09 is going to be *huge*!" she said enthusiastically. "I won't steal any of Joe's thunder & get too specific about the stories he will have for Dawn in 2009, but as his co-colorist on ***Dawn***, I can tell you there will be *lots* of Dawn in print... and lots of Dawn goodies as well – T-shirts, portfolios, the works. 2009 is the Year of the Goddess!"

"Dawn's 20th anniversary is going to see a number of Dawn one-shots come out - single-issue stories that I have wanted to get to for years," Linsner explained. "*Clayburn Moore* is working on a ***Dark Ivory*** statue. He just released a ***Sinful Suzi*** statue based on a demoness character of mine, which is gorgeous. In 2009 he will hopefully get to dance with ***Dawn***. I am pretty excited."

"Hey, didya see what Joe said about a ***Dark Ivory*** statue from *Clayburn Moore*? Excuse me while I go do a little happy dance!..." Hopkins joked, adding that "2009 will see me return to my duties as ***Dawn***'s co-colorist, as well as a new collection of my comic short stories that I'm gonna call ***Hit & Run***, featuring Bitter Girl. Plus I'll be contributing to Image comics' next ***Popgun*** anthology. Busy, busy, times – now & 2009, too. I'm so geeked!"

As will be a number of comic book readers when ***Dark Ivory #1***, a $2.99 comic, makes its late March appearance in comic shops!

**by Cliff Biggers**

**Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!**

## CSNsider

•*J. Michael Straczynski* has ended his exclusive with Marvel; as a result, readers can look forward to seeing his byline on books from DC and Image, as well as Marvel. No word as of yet regarding his DC assignment (although when asked at one panel which DC character he considers his favorite, JMS immediately named Superman), but at Image he'll be producing a pair of creator-owned books, ***Justice*** and ***Ten Grand.*** He'll continue on ***The Twelve*** and ***Thor*** at Marvel, but he confirmed that his work on ***Squadron Supreme*** has come to an end; no word yet on whether Marvel will continue the concept with another writer. Straczynski is also working on an autobiography (no publisher or release date announced).

•Due to *Michael Turner's* ongoing health problems, Aspen is putting future solicitations for Turner's ***Soulfire*** on hold until the publisher has built up a backlog of material.

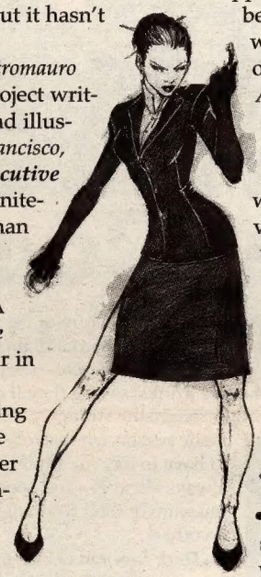
•***Soulfire: New World Order,*** originally announced as an ongoing series, will most likely change to a prestige-format series of oneshots or miniseries to allow artist *Francesco Herrerra* more time to illustrate each arc.

•***Shrugged*** artist *Micah Gunnel* will probably work on a Marvel project before tackling a new Aspen book.

•***Fathom*** will return this summer, courtesy of writer *J.T. Krul* and artist *Ale Garza.*

•***Fathom: The Definitive Edition TP*** is in the works, but it hasn't been scheduled yet.

•Aspen's *Frank Mastromauro* announced a new project written by *David Wohl* and illustrated by *Eduardo Francisco,* tentatively titled ***Executive Assistant.*** ""It's definitely a different story than people are used to seeing from us," Mastromauro said. A preview of ***Executive Assistant*** will appear in Aspen's Free Comic Book Day book coming out in May, while the series will launch later in the year – the company is looking for a late fall/early winter launch with a #0. Wohl said the series is set in 1970s/'80s China, when women were trained as assistants and bodyguards for high-powered businessmen. "It was bad form to bring in a big, burly guy to a meeting, so these women were trained to be both servant and assistant, as well as bodyguards for the men they served," Wohl said. "Our protagonist is an orphan who was pulled from her situation and trained to be a tool both for killing as well as pouring tea properly, and throughout the story, she realizes that what she's become is probably not perhaps what she should be, as her 'master' is not a very nice person. It's the story of her awakening."



•Aspen hasn't given up on ***Ekos*** by *Geoff Johns & Michael Turner;* Geoff Johns has completely written the long-delayed series, and Turner hopes to begin illustrating it once he finishes three more issues of ***Soulfire*** and six books for Marvel.

•Dark Horse reports that there's a major bit of ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer*** news coming up in July—but they wouldn't say any more than that. ***Buffy Season Nine,*** perhaps?...

•Several major Hellboy projects are in the works for 2008, including a three-issue series set in Appalachia, and a six-issue series ***Hellboy: The Wild Hunt,*** which *Mike Mignola* was working on while he was scripting the second movie.

•Dark Horse's *Shawna Ervin-Gore* confirmed that Dark Horse intends to collect the entire twenty-year run of ***Creepy*** in thirteen or fourteen hardcover archival volumes (the hardcovers will only feature the original material from each issue, not the reprinted stories that appeared later in the run). The art will be presented in the same size as it was originally published, and none of the art (by such comics legends as *Al Williamson, Reed Crandall, Wally Wood, Steve Ditko, Frank Frazetta, Joe Orlando, Neal Adams,* and *Bernie Wrightson)* will be altered in any way for these collections. The first volume is slated for summer release, with three volumes per year forthcoming. A second series collecting the entire run of ***Eerie*** will kick off in 2009.

•Dark Horse will also produce an all-new ***Creepy*** anthology comic; the black and white publication will feature the work of acclaimed contemporary writers and artists.

•*Bernie Wrightson's* illustrated version of *Mary Shelley's* ***Frankenstein*** will return to print later this year in a hardcover edition from Dark Horse. The beautifully illustrated novel has been out of print for many years.

•Dark Horse will collect *Keith Knight's* ***The K Chronicles*** in a 500+ page omnibus volume, complete with an introduction by *Kyle Baker.*

•Dark Horse is republishing the first volume of ***The Perry Bible Fellowship,*** complete with new material, in a new edition; Dark Horse will also be collecting the webcomics ***Achewood*** and ***Wonder Mart*** in a similar format.

•*Robert E. Howard's* ***Kull*** and ***Solomon Kane*** are both slated to make their Dark Horse comics debut this summer.

•A second ***Umbrella Academy*** series is in the planning stages, but a launch date has not yet been set.

•*Mark Wheaton, Joshua Fialkov, & Rahsan Ekdal* are the creative force behind ***The Cleaners,*** a new Dark Horse horror series that focuses on trauma scene cleaners who are brought in to clean up cases that the police don't want people to know about…things that could not, or should not, have happened...

•Dark Horse is working on a graphic novel tie-in for the upcoming ***Star Wars: Unleashed*** game; look for it in late summer or early fall.

•*Kelley Jones* has some ideas for a new ***13th Son*** series, but he won't begin work on it until he finishes up his work on a new ***Supernatural Freak Machine*** project written by *Steve Niles.*

•DC's *Dan DiDio* reported that *Adam Beechen* is working on a new ***Batgirl*** miniseries. Beechen said that the story will answer all the questions from the last few years, and will address all of the questions of why Batgirl has been acting the way she's been acting, and set the stage for new Batgirl adventures to come.

•DC is considering an ***Ambush Bug*** collected edition featuring the zany character's earlier appearances; if it happens, it'll probably appear in conjunction with the new ***Ambush Bug*** series that's in the works.

•While there's no ***Batwoman*** series in the works, *Dan Di Dio* said that the character will be play an integral role in the DCU in 2008.

•The *Geoff Johns-J.G. Jones* ***All-Star Batgirl*** series that was announced last summer is now off the schedule, since neither creator is currently available—but DC is looking at bringing in another team to work on it at some point in the future.

•Boom Studios expands its line of Games Workshop-inspired comics with ***Blood Bowl: Killer Contract,*** a five-part limited series by *Matt Forbeck & Lads Helloven* that takes the concept of fantasy football to an extreme that includes elves, dwarves, orcs, and ogres. "This miniseries is a natural fit for Boom after doing the ***Warhammer 40K*** and ***Warhammer*** series," Boom Studios' *Ross*

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# Comic Shop Newsarama

## Produced by Comic Shop News in cooperation with Matt Brady and newsarama.com

*Richie* said. "***Blood Bowl*** combines the best parts of fantasy and football: gore and guts."

•*Judd Winick* said that he's brainstorming on a new ***Barry Ween*** project, and he has some story ideas in development.

•Will Jimmy Olsen survive ***Countdown to Final Crisis?*** Apparently so, since writers *Geoff Johns* and *James Robinson* both have big plans for the character in forthcoming Superman storylines.

•Are there plans for a ***Power Girl*** monthly series? "There's a story that's going to be told where Power Girl goes to visit Earth-2, and how that story resolves itself could ultimately lead to more stories for Power Girl," *Dan DiDio* replied.

•What are the Kuberts up to? *Adam Kubert* is finishing up the "Last Son" storyline before moving on to an as-yet-unannounced standalone miniseries; *Andy Kubert* is working on the second issue of another as-yet-unannounced four-part miniseries, and has another project in the works that DC will announce later this year.

•A ***Lex Luthor*** miniseries is in the works, but it's not on the schedule quite yet.

•*Dan DiDio* and *James Robinson* dropped a few hints about an as-yet-unnamed Robinson project that's in the works. When DiDio asked Robinson if he enjoyed writing Green Arrow, the writer replied, "In the book we can't talk about?"

•*James Robinson* is also working on a ***Shade*** limited series that's tentatively slated for 2009 release.

•*Adam Beechen* will write the seventh installment of the Dr. Fate storyline in ***Countdown to Mystery;*** the story will be based on *Steve Gerber's* plot that was dictated from his hospital bed, while the eighth issue will feature separate four-page endings by *Gail Simone, Mark Waid, Mark Evanier,* and *Adam Beechen,* each writing the ending that he/she thought Gerber would have done had he lived long enough to finish the series.

•The Birds of Prey are moving out of Metropolis, making a new fictional city their home turf in the near future. Editor *Mike Carlin* also revealed that writer *Tony Bedard* is setting up a confrontation between Barbara Gordon and the Joker—the man responsible for her near-death and partial paralysis.

•DC hinted that the version of the Legion of Super-Heroes currently seen in ***Action Comics*** will appear again in the near future, although no specifics were offered.

•*Kurt Busiek & Carlos Pacheco* are working on a new ***Arrowsmith*** project, ***Arrowsmith: Far From the Fields We Know.*** Rather than a graphic novel, this will be an illustrated prose novel similar to ***Stardust.*** The story focuses on Fletcher Arrowsmith in a Prussian prison on a secret mission for the Allies behind enemy lines, as well as behind the lines of the mystic lands as well.

•The first issue of Devil's Due's monster-military series ***Spooks*** has sold out in its first week of a release; a second printing, featuring a new cover by *Drew Struzan,* is in the works. "It's hard getting a new idea out there into such a crowded field, and for the fans to get behind us is wonderful -- when you spend years working on something you just hope people will enjoy it, and we're absolutely delighted with the response so far," said writer *Ryan Schifrin.* "It's been a labor of love from the start, as I worked with *Bob Salvatore* [who supplied the concepts for many of the monsters] and *Larry Hama* [who supplied the military background] to take a spark of an idea and turn it to an epic."

•WildStorm hopes to publish more ***Desolation Jones*** material when the creative team is able to produce it in a more sustainable fashion. Peterson said that like other publishers, they are happy to publish anything from *Warren Ellis* when he turns it in.

•WildStorm hopes to publish the final issue of ***Planetary*** in the fourth quarter of this year. Once the series is complete, DC is considering a second printing of the ***Absolute Planetary*** to answer the continual fan demand for this hard-to-find volume.

•*Gene Ha & Zander Cannon* have finished the first issue of the new ***Top Ten: Season Three*** series, which picks up fairly soon after the events of ***Top Ten: The Forty Niners.*** WildStorm will wait until they have a number of issues in the can before they add the book to the schedule, but they're optimistic that the first issue will appear before the end of 2008.

•*J. Scott Campbell* is still working on the *Jeph Loeb*-written ***Spider-Man*** project that was announced over a year ago; look for it to appear in 2009.

•A collection of *James Jean's* ***Fables*** cover art is in the works; look for the coffee-table hardcover next year. The book will also feature new Jean artwork featuring Bigby, Snow White and the cubs.

•*Matt Wagner's* ***Madame Xanadu*** series will explore the character's Arthurian roots, covering her life over a millennium or more. "The story is basically one long gothic romance between Madame Xanadu and Phantom Stranger," Wagner said said.

•The first issue of *Joe Hill's* fantasy-horror series ***Locke & Key*** sold out from IDW in less than one day of release, the publisher has announced—and there have been so many subsequent reorders that IDW is rushing a second printing into production. "IDW overprinted the first issue of ***Locke & Key #1*** by a significant quantity and it still sold out the day it was released," *Ted Adams,* president of IDW Publishing, said. "Joe and [artist] *Gabriel Rodriguez* have created an amazing comic and I'm proud to publish it. We're committed to making sure the book is available and we're working to get the second printing into stores as quickly as possible." (And in case you missed the news when ***CSN*** reported it earlier: *Joe Hill* is not only an acclaimed novelist in his own right, but he is also the son of popular literature legend *Stephen King.)*

•Top Cow was so pleased with the response to their ***Pilot Season 2007*** competition—and the very strong fan response—that they've already announced plans for ***Pilot Season 2008,*** which will involve six "series pilots." Two of the new titles will be ***Lady Pendragon*** by *Matt Hawkins,* with a cover by *Drew Struzan;* and ***Twilight Guardian*** by *Troy Hickman & Reza.* The remaining four titles will be announced in the coming weeks.

•*Sergio Aragones & Mark Evanier* are working on an offbeat project that brings together two of comics' best-known barbarian heroes: Groo and Conan. Having initially rejected the idea of a crossover, Aragones found the solution to the problem of how to have the two characters face each other when no one involved wanted their character to lose by watching *Akira Kurosawa's* classic ***Rashomon.*** *Tom Yeates* is slated to draw the Conan part, though the complete division of labor is still up in the air. Also in the works is Groo and Tarzan, which Sergio felt is easier as "Tarzan went into a place where there were dinosaurs. Well, if he can find dinosaurs, he can find Groo."

•According to editor *Scott Peterson,* the upcoming ***DC/WildStorm: Dreamwar*** crossover project written by *Keith Giffen* will *not* involve the multiverse. Peterson said that Giffen had found a way to tell the story *without* invoking the 52 worlds of the DC multiverse.

•*Greg Rucka* has confirmed that he is leaving ***Checkmate*** after the 25th issue. "I was not removed from the book," Rucka said. "I decided that #25 would be my final issue on the title at least a year ago, and informed DC editorial of my decision shortly thereafter. Since then, I've tried to arrange things such that my departure would leave the book in as strong a position as possible, and headed in the direction I thought best...

"Mine and Eric's final arc will be 'Castling,' beginning with issue #23 and ending with issue #25. We think it's some of the best work we've done on the title, and, hey, it finally—finally!—reveals the identity of the Rooks! I firmly believe we're going out strong, and I hope you'll all continue to read it, and that you'll share our opinion if you do."

•Marvel veteran illustrator *Herb Trimpe* announced at WonderCon that Marvel has approached him about doing a new ten-page Hulk story. During the 1970s and much of the 1980s, Trimpe was *the* Hulk artist as far as fans of the green-skinned goliath were concerned, so his return to the character—even on a limited basis—is cause for celebration.

•Top Cow's major storyline event for 2008 will be ***Broken Trinity;*** while the publisher didn't reveal very much about the event's plot, they did show a *Kenneth Rocafort* cover that showed Witchblade and other female Top Cow characters.

•*Sergio Leone's* famous taciturn Western hero, portrayed in film by the legendary *Clint Eastwood,* makes his comic book debut in May's ***The Man With No Name #1,*** a Dynamite release produced by *Christos Gage & Wellington Diaz.* ***The Man With No Name: The Good, The Bad and the Uglier #1*** follows the characters and plots of the film, serving as a sequel to the critically acclaimed series. Each issue features covers by *Richard Isanove* as well as a special "zombie" cover by *Arthur Suydam.* (What do zombies have to do with Leone's spaghetti Western? We have no idea—but apparently, everything's better with zombies on it!)

## KB Toys With DC's Big Three in Trinity

Back in ***CSN #1080,*** we spoke with *Dan DiDio, Mike Carlin,* and *Mark Bagley* about the major new DC weekly series ***Trinity*** that launches in June of this year. Now, writer *Kurt Busiek* spills the beans about the development of the project and his involvement in the first weekly series to focus on the Big Three—Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman.

How did Busiek become involved in ***Trinity?*** "I made it up," Busiek told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Troy Brownfield.* "Well, sort of.I actually pitched a very different project, to start with. The only two similarities, really, was that it was weekly and starred Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. But the actual start of the project came from me.

"First, a little back-story: Back when I was in high school and reading comics, there was a lot more line-wide promotion than there seems to be today. There were more house ads in the books, there were checklists of what's coming out next week, there were dumb little things like Marvel running little ad-lines at the bottom of comics pages—'It's Greenskin Vs. the Gelatinous Glob in The Incredible Hulk!' under page 4 of all the Marvel titles that month, that sort of thing—and DC had this feature called 'The Daily Planet,' which was their version of Marvel's Bullpen Bulletins.

"But where the Bullpen Bulletins talked about what the staff was doing, and teased new projects in the works and such, the Daily Planet was a mock newspaper front page that ran in all the books, that had two or three 'articles' about books that'd be out on the stands the following week, plus a full checklist of what would be out next week, a list of what was on the stands this week, a cartoon by *Fred Hembeck* or a Q&A column with *Bob 'The Answer Man' Rozakis,* that sort of thing.

"And every week, I'd read those articles and that checklist, and I'd think, 'Huh, Batman meets Scalphunter in the next ***Brave & Bold.*** Do I want to buy that?' And, well, no, I didn't, not in that case -- but at least I was more aware of what was coming out, and I thought about buying books I'd never even have looked at otherwise. That page probably sold me a lot of DC Comics over the years, and it made me aware of DC as a line, everything from ***Superman*** to ***Weird War Tales,*** from ***Justice League*** to ***Jonah Hex.***

"These days, you don't get that sort of thing, so much. And I thought it would be a good idea to have something that served a similar purpose -- that would help push books like ***Jonah Hex*** or ***Metal Men*** or whatever else could use a push, not just the new launches and big titles, which is mostly what we get today.

"So I thought it'd be good to have a really cheap weekly book, one that had a lead story that would have lots off big, fun, important stuff happen, so readers would want to follow it regularly, but which would also have other features, promoting whatever would be on the stands the next week, or would show you advance art to a new series, a checklist of upcoming stuff—all the kind of thing that used to make me think about DC as a whole line of books, and think about reading more of it, but with more space than the one page the ***Daily Planet*** had, back when.

"So what I pitched was a twelve-page weekly comic for a buck, called ***DC Superstars,*** featuring a seven-page lead story with Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, and backup stuff promoting the rest of the line. It'd be a third of a monthly book for a third of the price, so it'd be easy to just grab at the cash register and go, every week, and it'd have modern-day readers getting the kind of news and information I used to get about the whole DC line, as well. The lead stories would be big stuff—Superman discovers a third Kryptonian living on Earth, Queen Hippolyta gets resurrected, Rao gets reincarnated in human form, Batman faces a new business competitor for Wayne Enterprises that brings major supermenaces to Gotham—and there'd be lots of guest-stars, so it'd be cool stuff to read, and hopefully it'd win more readers to the rest of DC's line, too.

"I was in New York and I had no idea whether DC would be interested or not, but I figured that if I didn't at least pitch it, I couldn't grumble that they were too dumb to grab a good idea when they saw one. So I wandered into *Dan DiDio's* office, and outlined it for him.

"This was back in 2006, after ***52*** had been announced but before it had come out. Initial response to ***52*** from retailers had been really strong, so Dan liked the idea of doing something else weekly, and he liked the idea of showcasing Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, and promoting the rest of the line. So he took it to *Paul Levitz,* and Paul liked it too, and it was planned to be something that would follow ***52.***

"And you can all see how it's coming out just like I pitched it, right?" Busiek joked.

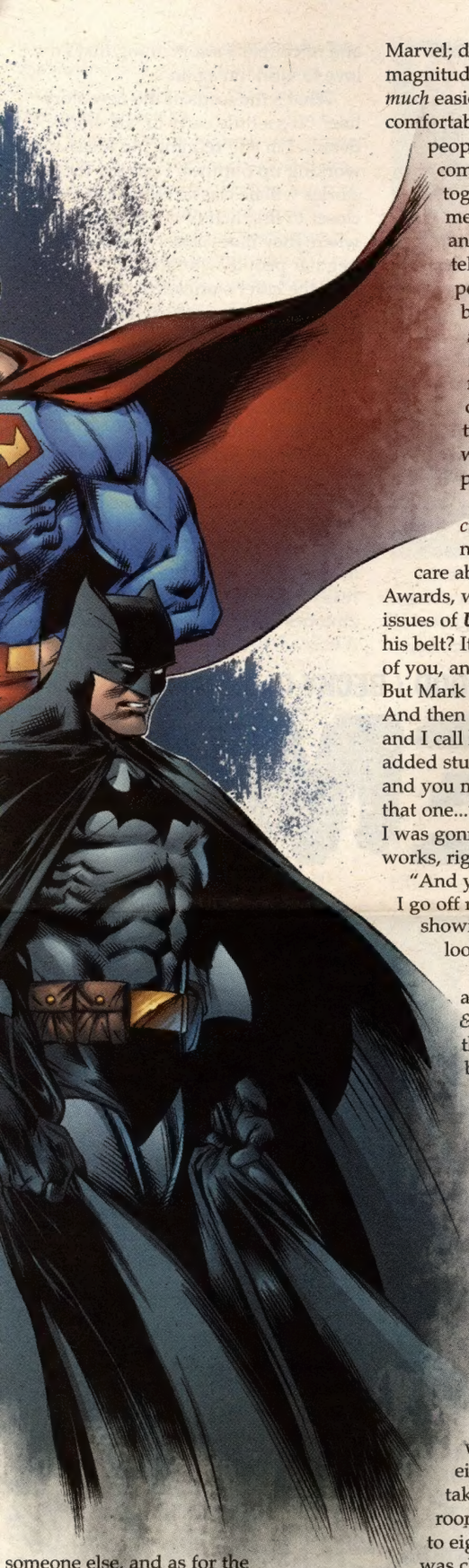
"It's now two years later, there's been another weekly book in-between, the title's been changed to ***Trinity,*** it's now not ongoing but a year-long epic storyline abut who the Trinity are, why they matter and what effect they have on the DC Universe as a whole, it's a full twenty-two pages every week, and all that promotional stuff that got me to pitch it in the first place fell out somewhere along the way.

"But along the course of making all those changes, we got a wonderful artist, we worked out a big, sprawling story that's got lots of momentum, lots of big stuff and needs all those twenty-two pages, not just for Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, but for all the other characters that would need to appear. So it developed into a very different thing, but a very exciting one, and I was still hanging on, so there I was, writing or co-writing over eleven hundred pages worth of stuff in the course of a year, when I'd pitched about four hundred.

"But it's *still* weekly, and it *still* stars

Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. So you can still see the roots of what I pitched in the monster that grew from it.

"And it's a good thing that we worked out a whole new story, because over the months in-between, the Third Kryptonian showed up in Superman, Queen Hippolyta got resurrected by



someone else, and as for the Batman and Rao things, well, maybe I'll get to them somewhere...

"I *do* still think all that promo stuff was a good idea, though, and DC should find a way to do it. Maybe online somewhere..."

Busiek has a long history with star artist *Mark Bagley* from their years at Marvel; does that make a project of this magnitude a bit easier? "It makes it all *much* easier, I think. It's always more comfortable when you're working with people you know, people you're comfortable with. And three years together on ***Thunderbolts*** makes me know I can throw just about anything at Bags, and the storytelling will be energetic and powerful, and the drawing will be great. Mark's also not shy about picking up the phone, so we wind up talking a lot more, sharing ideas or concerns, and I think that helps the writing and art to mesh well, to make sure we're pulling in the same direction.

"What makes it more *difficult*, of course, is that Mark's not scared of me. What does he care about a bunch of Eisner Awards, when he's got 110 consecutive issues of ***Ultimate Spider-Man*** under his belt? It's easier when they're scared of you, and they'll do whatever you say. But Mark just laughs at me, the bum. And then he turns in gorgeous pages, and I call him up to say, 'Hey, you added stuff here, and you changed this, and you made this panel bigger than that one...' and he says, 'Yeah, I told you I was gonna do that, remember? And it works, right?'

"And yeah, he did, and it does. And I go off mumbling about how he's showing me up, making the book look better like that.

"But if I'm lucky, McDaniel and Derenick [*Scott McDaniel & Tom Derenick,* who'll supply the visuals for the interrelated backup stories in each issue] will be scared of me, and I'll be able to push them around. Not so far, at least, but I live in hope."

Obviously, a weekly schedule is incredibly demanding for an artist; how is it for the series' writer? "Probably somewhere in between challenging and terrifying," Busiek said. "It required a lot of advance planning, of course, and just plain time to work on it. Originally, when I was talking about twenty-eight pages a month, I was taken off ***Aquaman*** to make room for it. But when it ballooned to eighty-eight pages a month, it was clear that I was going to have to let ***Superman*** go, too, to make more room.

"And we'd already brought in *Fabian Nicieza* to help me out on the back chapters each week. It's working out well—Fabes and I are comfortably ahead of the artists on plots at the moment, and will be pulling farther ahead soon, as my last issue of ***Superman*** gets done. I have dreams, sometimes, of having all fifty-two issues fully plotted by sometime in September, so we're *waaay* ahead of the game and won't have to worry about schedule pressure."

Since the one constant throughout the series' development has been its core trio of heroes, it leads to the logical question: what is Busiek's essential view of DC's heroic Trinity? "Aw, that's what the series as a whole is about. And in particular, ***Trinity #6*** will give readers a lot to chew on on that front, and I don't want to give too much away.

"But I *will* say that the ***Trinity*** are DC's big guns, their Big Three—not just the best-known names to audiences, moviegoers and such worldwide, but the heroes that are most looked up to and respected within the world, as well. And there are all these fascinating balances to them—one is from outer space, the science-fiction hero, one's built on ancient legends, the hero of myth, and one represents humanity at its peak, no powers, just skill and drive.

"Another way to look at it is they're the Sun, the Moon and the Earth—one is empowered by the sun, one's a creature of the light, one is literally made of the clay of the Earth. Call 'em Apollo, Artemis and Hades—or Justice, Vengeance and Hope—or the Protector, the Detective and the Warrior—there's a lot to work with. And we'll be working with a lot of it."

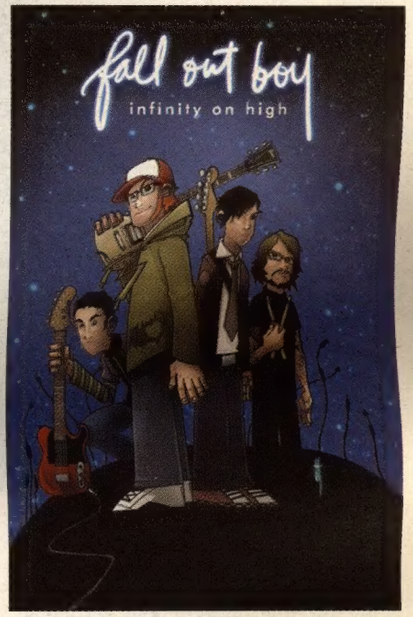
***Trinity #1*** is slated for June release; look for more reports on this major weekly project in upcoming issues of ***CSN.***

## Fall Out Boy Springs Into Comics This Fall

Mention the Dabel Brothers to most comics readers, and you immediately conjure up images of adaptations of genre best-sellers such as ***Anita Blake, Dean Koontz's Frankenstein, The Dresden Files, Hedge Knight,*** and ***Wild Cards,*** among others. However, the publishers are striking a different note with ***Fall Out Boy,*** a comic book project produced in conjunction with the group's drummer, *Andy Hurley,* and bassist *Pete Wentz.*

"*Les [Dabel]* and I had conversation early part of last year when we were brainstorming about new project ideas," Dabel Brothers business director *Rich Young* said. "I told him that I'd always wanted to work with a popular band that was into comics, and gave him a very short list. Fall Out Boy was on that list, so I started making inquiries."

While a comic involving an emo rock group might seem like a stretch for the Dabel Brothers, Young said that this is just the sort of project that the Dabels have been looking for. "Our publishing plan is to continue doing the projects we're known for – working with well-known literary authors, but also to start branching out and diversifying our publishing line up by working with licensors in the music, tv, film, and interactive industries," Young said, noting that the pairing with Fall Out Boy most likely won't be the only project they will be doing with a band or musical artist.




The finished project will consist of many stories told over the course of two, perfect bound 56-64 page issues due to hit stores in the third of fourth quarter of this year. As for art, Young says that a collection of artists will be pitching in,most notably *Dan Fraga.*

"Dan's got a relationship with *Pete Wentz,* and Pete specifically requested him to come on board, so we got him," Young said. "We're looking at a few other artists as well, as there will be multiple stories."

## This Demo's the Real Deal

***Demo,*** the acclaimed limited series from *Brian Wood & Becky Cloonan,* is on it sway back—twice!

Not only is there a forthcoming Vertigo collected edition of the twelve-part limited series featuring stories that focus on the lives of young people dealing with supernatural powers they possess, and the ways those powers affect their lives.

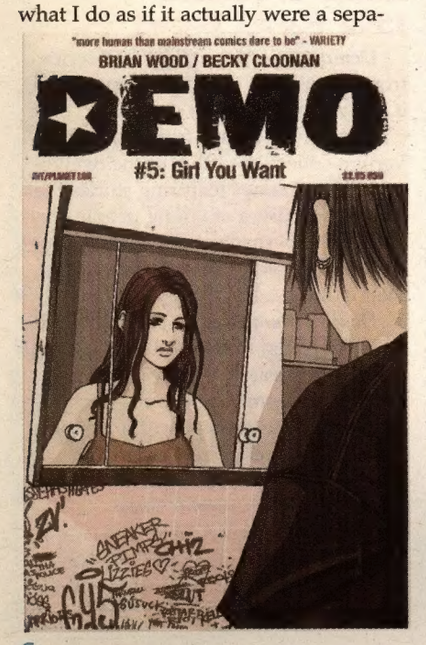
***Demo Volume Two,*** a six-issue limited series slated for late 2008 release, will reunite the creators—both of whom have recently made a move to Vertigo—to continue the concept with more original stories. "Becky and I arrived at Vertigo around the same time as each other," Wood told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Chris Arrant,* "but unknown to each other and on completely separate paths. ***Demo*** was the common factor, though. *Will Dennis,* my

editor on ***DMZ*** and ***Northlanders***, really liked ***Demo***, and *Shelly Bond*, who got Becky in on ***American Virgin***, also was as well. I guess it was only logical that ***Demo*** would end up there as well, once we regained control of it [rights to the book, originally published by AiT/PlanetLar, reverted to the creators last year].

"For me, Vertigo was always the place to be. Vertigo comics got me into the medium in the first place back in the mid-90's. My first paying work was for *Shelly Bond*, paid art samples I did for possible fill-in work on ***House of Secrets***. It took me a long time to feel I was ready to seriously work for that company, to deliver work that was mature and sophisticated and up to the standards set by the real heavyweights who made that imprint what it is. I think I'm still proving myself."

"I've only been drawing comics professionally for a few years, and I haven't worked with too many companies," *Becky Cloonan* added. "I'm lucky though, because not only does Vertigo have a great deal from the creator rights standpoint, but they also pay me enough so that I don't need to do commercial work on the side; comics is my full time job right now. Vertigo is definitely a good place for me to be, and I consider myself pretty lucky to be working with them. Coming to them I didn't have much work under my belt besides ***Demo***, and I think they really took a chance on hiring me so for that I'm grateful."

"Actually, the work seems to fit in better at a place like Vertigo," Wood said. "I've never really felt like I was working for DC, while working for Vertigo, at least not the DCU DC. Vertigo feels like its own company, and what goes on with the superhero books in the DCU feels about as relevant to what I do as if it actually were a separate company. In short, nothing is changing in my head, doing ***Demo*** at Vertigo. Except maybe that I need to step up my game, make these six stories truly worthy of the faith people like *Karen Berger*, *Will Dennis*, and *Jack Mahan* have in the book."



Wood said that "each story in ***Demo Volume Two*** will have its own title, just like the first series." As to why he settled on a six-issue run, Wood said that six is "a nice round number. Makes a good size trade. Six was about all I felt I was ready to take on at the moment, considering I have two monthly books running now. We can always do more, a third series if we feel there's more in us."

Cloonan is eager to return to the series that launched her career. "With the first ***Demo*** series, everybody involved was breaking new ground ... me as an artist, Brian as a writer and AiT-PlanetLar as a publisher. It's been about five years since then, and re-visiting the series to me is the biggest change of all. Having Vertigo as a publisher means we'll have a bigger audience, yes, but at the same time we're going into it with new perspectives. I think that's the biggest change of all is the number of pages between I've drawn between then and now. My life in general has changed a lot too, so I'm coming at the new issues with a new perspective but it won't change any of the themes or ideas that ***Demo*** unique."

As to how the idea of a ***Demo*** continuation came out, Wood said that "the plan to bring the original ***Demo*** over to Vertigo goes back awhile, and was part of my exclusive contract I signed towards the end of 2006. At that time, I suggested to *Will Dennis* that it would be a good idea to do a short run of new ***Demo***, both for the simple pleasure of revisiting that title and having the chance to work with Becky again, but also on a practical level.

"We're about to introduce the original ***Demo*** to a whole new, potentially huge audience that most likely never noticed it when it was at AiT, simply because they are a small company with a limited reach into the direct market (the sad fact that some retailers just don't order from small press companies). A new series would give all of ***Demo*** a nice little bump in awareness and give long time readers something new to enjoy.'

"I think a big part of the decision was that the timing was right," Cloonan added, "with ***American Virgin*** coming to a close and everything. Brian suggested it to me I think sometime last year, and of course it's something that I'd love to work on again."

What's the focus of the new storyline? "It's a little early to talk story details. I'm still refining my ideas and working up outlines. I can say these six stories will be classic ***Demo***-type stories, closer to first half of the original edition, where they more closely followed the 'regular people with powers' formula than the latter stories where I gave myself a lot more leeway with the concept. I have some ideas about water-breathers, OCD, astral projection, time travel, and even self-detonation. But I'm still thinking, still refining. We have some time still."

While the AiT collected edition of the original ***Demo*** series was published in a smaller trim size, "the new edition will be brought back up to full comic book size," Wood said. "I really love the 6x9 format of the AiT edition, but it did really funky things to Becky's art, to the ziptones specifically, and in that respect it was a failed attempt. I felt especially

BRIAN WOOD / BECKY CLOONAN

DEMO

bad since I was the one that did all the conversion and production on that book, all 328 pages of it. So we're correcting that mistake.

"The new edition will also be printed on better paper, and it's possible there may be some amount of extras, such as the original covers or some artwork Becky's done that's never seen print in any previous ***Demo*** publication. We're weighing our options. The backmatter from the original series was never meant to see print in a collected edition, but so much time as passed and a lot has changed with the book, it might make sense to include a fraction of it for new readers who never had the chance to buy the single issues in the first place."

How does it feel to return to a concept that helped to establish Wood and Cloonan as major comics talents? "It's a bit of a mixture of feelings," Wood said. "I have tremendous affection and a real sense of loyalty to the ***Demo*** 'brand,' if we can call it that. To the idea of ***Demo***, to what Becky and I accomplished in the past. She and I had both published previously, but ***Demo*** felt like a landmark, a milestone and I can say for myself that it's the book that really 'made' me, that graduated me up to the next level. So getting a fantastic chance to return to that feels pretty good. I've written something over fourteen hundred pages of comics since ***Demo***, so I can't wait to apply that experience to making this new ***Demo*** absolutely amazing, both for myself and for our readers.

The ***Demo*** trade paperback is slated for May release; ***Demo Volume Two*** is tentatively slated to debut this fall.

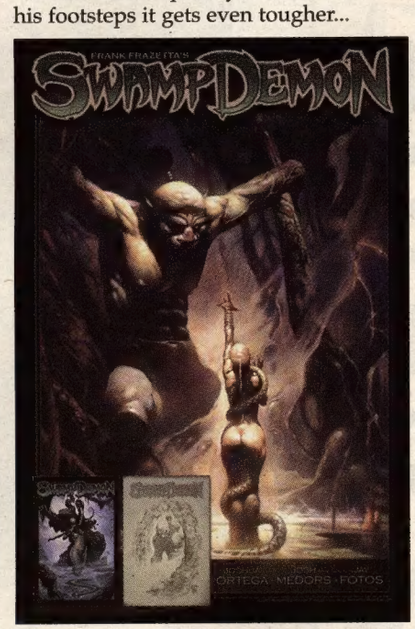
## Coming Comics—Image in May

Thea's life as an adrenalin junky becomes a Greek Tragedy after mythological gods kill her boyfriend and destroy her town in ***Alethia***, a three-part series by *Bob LeFevre*.

Meet the menace that comes to savage the Earth once every thousand years in ***Death Grub***, a done-in-one-day oneshot by *Ryan Ottley*.

*Jimmie Robinson's* malevolent antihero returns in ***Bomb Queen V***, a six-issue limited series that begins when Bomb Queen is framed for a series of murders in the small town of Littleville. Trapped in her city of crime, the Queen employs a ragtag group of fanboys to discover the truth... before Littleville brings justice in the form of the Ultimate Superhero.

*Phil Hester & Andy Kuhn* bring back their cult-favorite superhero-monster series ***Firebreather*** in an all-new monthly series this spring. High school is tough enough for normal kids, but when your Dad is a city-stomping giant monster who expects you to follow in his footsteps it gets even tougher...



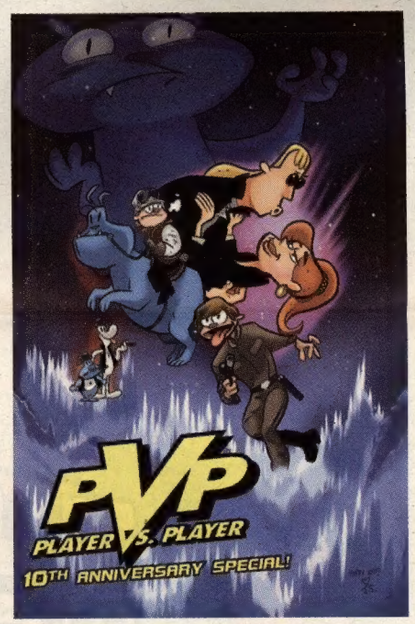

*Joshua Ortega, Josh Medors, & Jay Fotos* present a dark fantasy tale of druids, demons, and the witch-goddess known as Kallista in ***Frank Frazetta's Swamp Demon***, a oneshot that reunites the ***Ruins of Ragnan*** team.

Meet a superhero whose identity is so secret that even *he* doesn't know what it is in ***Gemini***, a five-issue limited series by *Jay Faerber & Jon Sommariva*. Dan Johnson is just a normal guy with a normal job—or so he thinks. What he doesn't know is that a secret organization is using him as their weapon against crime.

A young boy discovers that his local zoo may be far more frightening than he ever imagined in ***Monster Zoo***, an original graphic novel by the incomparable *Doug Tennapel*.

Top Cow kicks off ***Pilot Season 2008*** with ***Lady Pendragon***, an Arthurian SF/fantasy by *Matt Hawkins & ERU*, and ***Twilight Guardian***, a slice-of-life superhero drama by *Troy Hickman & Reza*.

Pretty Boy Floyd, Baby Face Nelson, and Machine Gun Kelly join forces against Al Capone in ***Pretty Baby Machine***, a three-issue noir drama by *Clark Westerman & Kody Chamberlain*.




*Scott Kurtz* celebrates the tenth anniversary of his mega-popular online strip in the ***PVP Tenth Anniversary Special***, which features material by Kurtz, *Cully Hamner, Joseph Michael Linsner, Todd Dezago, Craig Rousseau, Lea Hernandez, Jeff Smith*, and others.

A war photographer who is unable to feel pain makes use of his unique ability—or is it a curse?—as he tracks down the kidnapped daughter of a wealthy San Francisco family in ***The Safest Place***, an original graphic novel by *Steven Grant, Victor Riches, & Tom Mandrake*.

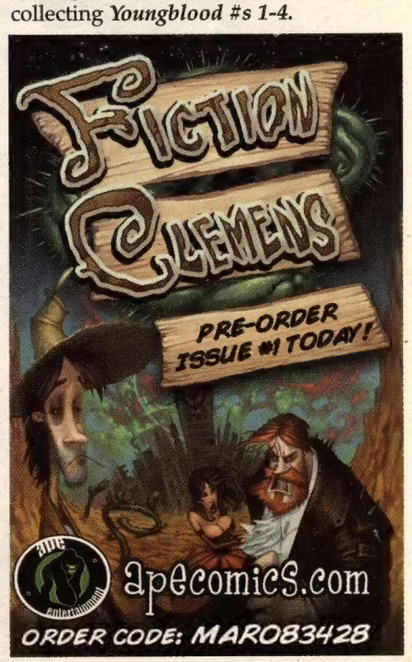
Find out who's who and what's what in the Spawn Universe in ***Spawn: The Book of the Dead***, a seventy-two-page hardcover guidebook by *David Hine* with art by *Ashley Wood & Geirrod Van Dyke*.

Pay a visit to the working world of some of comics' best known creators in ***Studio Space***, a trade paperback that takes readers into the artists' studios to show how they work. The environs of *Frank Miller, Mike Mignola, Jim Lee, Joe Kubert, Walter Simonson, Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, Tim Sale*, and others are spotlighted in the book's 320 pages.

*Todd Nauck* is back with a new installment of his made-for-TV superteam in ***Wildguard: Insider***, a three-issue miniseries with art by Nauck, *Steven Sanchez, & Justin Peterson*. Get an inside look into the lives and adventures of these reality TV heroes as part one of the exclusive WildGuard internet comic strips are collected for the very first time!

Image collected editions include:

- ***The Amazing Joy Buzzards Volume One: Here Come The Spiders***, by *Mark Andrew Smith & Dan Hipp*;
- ***Proof Volume One: Goatsucker***, collecting the first five issues of the series by *Alex Grecian & Riley Rossmo*;
- ***Suburban Glamour Volume One***, collecting the miniseries by *Jamie McKelvie*;
- ***Witchblade Volume Four***, collecting ***Witchblade #s 101-109***;
- ***Witchblade: Origins Volume One***, collecting ***Witchblade #s 1-8*** by *David Wohl, Christina Z, & Michael Turner*; and
- ***Youngblood Volume One: Focus Tested***, collecting ***Youngblood #s 1-4***.

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